

Forest Fire Lookouts

With fire suppression a priority for the young Forest Service, fire lookouts were established across the Forest.

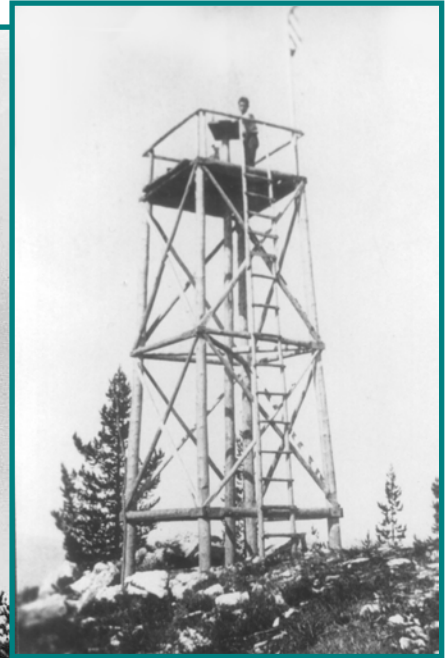
Early lookouts were merely high points with an unobstructed view that could be visited by patrolmen to “look out.”

Facilities and structures were minimal, primitive, and of indescribable variety. They were constructed by hand

with materials available on site and were intended to serve only the immediate needs of the patrolman.

Gradually the quality and effectiveness of fire lookouts and fire detection improved. Plans for lookouts, and to some extent other administrative structures, were standardized in order to maximize efficiency in construction and maintenance.

Some lookout points required a tower to obtain a view over the treetops. This type of structure had to be durable against extreme weather conditions, high winds, and lightning strikes.



Left: Seaburg Lookout tree, nd.

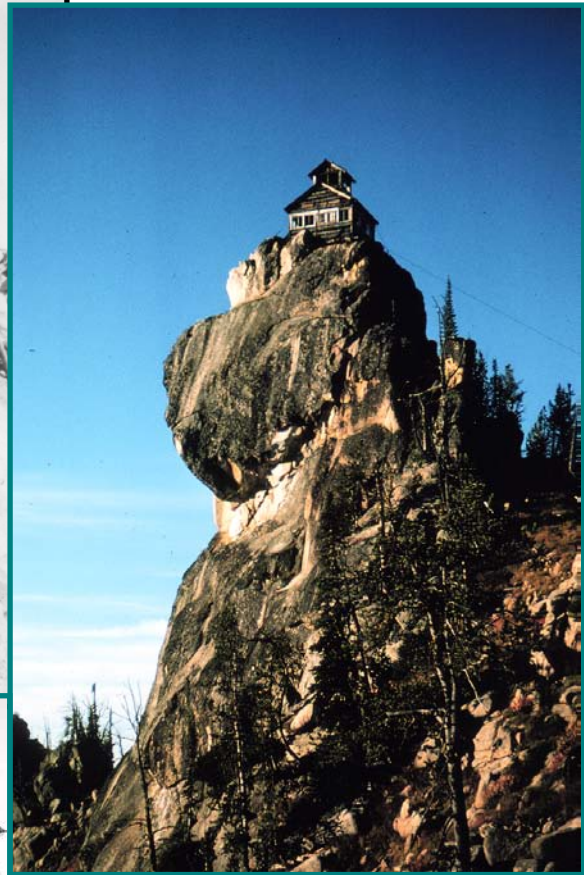
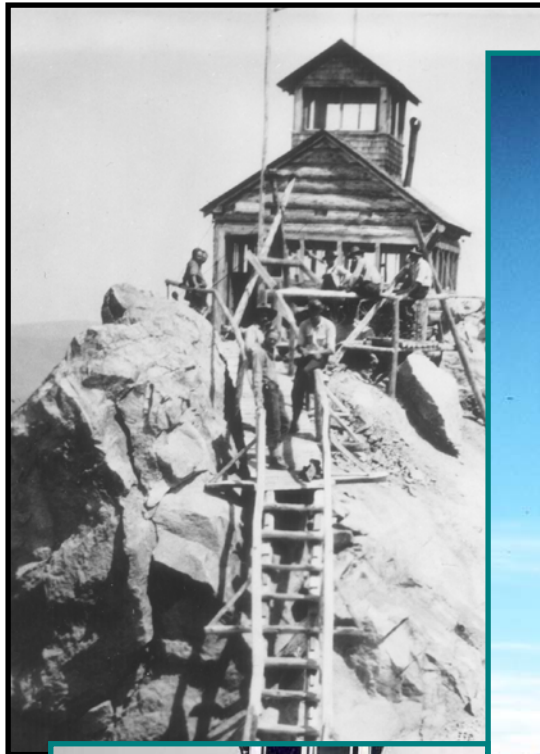
Right: Twin Buttes Lookout, 1927.
USFS photographs.



Burnt Knob Lookout, nd.
USFS photograph.



Above left: Quartz Ridge Lookout, nd. USFS photograph
Lower: Elk Summit Lookout and cabin, nd. USFS photograph
Above right: Iron Mountain Lookout, 1919.
 George V. Ring photograph.



Above left: Wylies Peak Lookout under construction, 1925.

USFS photograph.

Above right: Wylies Peak Lookout, 1979.

Art Seamans photograph.

Left: Wylies Peak Lookout, circa 1960's.

USFS photograph.

Wylies Peak Lookout was constructed atop a two hundred foot tall and thirty foot thick granite boulder deep within the Selway country. It became Floyd Cossit's task in 1925 to whittle enough off the top of that tapered finger to accommodate a fourteen-foot-wide cabin. He did so with the help of a hand-driven drift punch and 100 pounds of black powder. The top 25 feet of the original pinnacle was blown away in the process, to end up with the present elevation of 7,799 feet above sea level. Two hundred yards of steel cable were packed in 65 miles on mules. Logs were cut a half-mile away and hauled the last hundred yards by means of the endless cable threaded through a pulley at the top. Two mules provided the power to lift the logs up the cliff. In 1934 Wylies was officially closed forever. On Memorial Day 1983, the 58 year old landmark of the Selway was hit by lightning and burned to the ground.

-----Ray Kresek, Fire Lookouts of the Northwest.

Although many of the Forest's lookouts have been removed, the remaining few provide a vital link in communication, fire detection and suppression.



Upper left: Indian Hill Lookout, 2006.
Cindy Schacher photograph.

Upper right: Pilot Knob Lookout, 2004.
USFS photograph.

Below left: Sourdough Lookout, 1987.
USFS photograph.

Below right: Chair Point Lookout, 2006.
Steve Armstrong photograph.